NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 1-0547 APRIL 9, 1976
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NORTH VIETNAM: MILITARY PRIORITIES

ANNCR:

A YEAR AGO THIS MONTH COMMUNIST VIETNAMESE FORCES MOVED INTO INTO SAIGON TO COMPLETE THEIR TAKEOVER OF SOUTH VIETNAM. THE OUTCOME OF THE VIETNAM CONFLICT WAS TO A LARGE EXTENT DECIDED BY THE THOUSANDS OF NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS FIGHTING IN THE SOUTH. VOA'S JOSEPH KUN HAS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT ON SOME OF THE CONCERNS NOW BEING DETAILED IN THE HANOI PRESS ABOUT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT.

VOICE:

FOR THE PAST TWO DECADES THE NORTH VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT HAS MAINTAINED A WELL-DISCIPLINED ARMY OF SOME HALF A MILLION MEN. DURING MUCH OF THE WAR IN VIETNAM, NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS WERE DEPLOYED IN LARGE NUMBERS NOT ONLY IN SOUTH VIETNAM BUT IN LAOS AND CAMBODIA AS WELL. AND MANY THOUSANDS STILL REMAIN IN LAOS. BUT, WITH THE END OF THE FIGHTING IN INDOCHINA, THERE ARE SIGNS OF HANOI'S GROWING CONCERN ABOUT THE GENERAL STATE OF AFFAIRS IN NORTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY RANKS.

THIS CONCLUSION CAN BE DRAWN FROM COMMENT IN THE HANOI PRESS WHICH SPELLS OUT PROBLEMS OF MORALE AND DISCIPLINE IN THE NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY. THE MILITARY JOURNAL, "PEOPLE'S ARMY REVIEW" (THAP CHI QUAN DOI NHAN DAN), FOR ONE, IN SPEAKING OF THE NEED TO MODERNIZE THE NORTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT, COMPLAINS OF WASTE, CORRUPTION AND THE LACK OF DISCIPLINE IN THE ARMED FORCES. THE JOURNAL CITES SPECIFIC INSTANCES OF WASTE AND DAMAGE TO GOVERNMENT PROPERTY AND WHAT IT CALLS THE "OBJECTIONABLE

BEHAVIOR" OF THE MILITARY IN ITS CONDUCT AMONG THE CIVILIAN POPULATION.

AT THE SAME TIME, THERE ARE CALLS IN THE NORTH VIETNAMESE PRESS FOR THE MODERNIZATION OF THE ARMED FORCES, THE BUILDING OF A NATIONAL DEFENSE INDUSTRY, AND THE NEED TO KEEP UP WITH DEVELOPMENTS IN MILITARY SCIENCE ABROAD. THE COMMUNIST VIETNAMESE ACQUIRED HUGE QUANTITIES OF UP-TO-DATE AMERICAN MILITARY EQUIPMENT THAT COULD IN ITSELF ACCELERATE THE MODERNIZATION OF HANOI'S ARMED FORCES. NONETHELESS, IT'S ASSUMED THAT VIETNAM IS LIKELY TO REMAIN HEAVILY DEPENDENT ON WEAPONS SUPPLIED BY ITS COMMUNIST ALLIES, PRIMARILY THE SOVIET UNION.

THE HANOI MILITARY JOURNAL ALSO SPEAKS OF THE NEED TO DEFEND VIETNAM'S LAND, AIRSPACE AND TERRITORIAL WATERS, INCLUDING ISLANDS IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA OVER WHICH NORTH VIETNAM CLAIMS SOVEREIGNTY. HANOI'S CLAIM TO AT LEAST ONE GROUP OF ISLANDS -- THE SPRATLIES -- IS IN CONFLICT WITH A CLAIM OF OWNERSHIP TO THE ISLANDS BY THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA. THE SPRATLEY GROUP -- LYING SOME SIX HUNDRED FIFTY KILOMETERS EAST OF SAIGON, IS ALSO CLAIMED BY THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA ON TAIWAN AND THE PHILIPPINES. THE HEAVY STRESS NOW BEING GIVEN IN THE HANOI PRESS TO THE NEED FOR VIETNAM TO BUILD A STRONG AIRFORCE AND NAVY SUGGESTS AMONG OTHER THINGS HANOI'S DETERMINATION TO PROTECT ITS INTERESTS IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA.

JS/CAK